369. Extreme situations

By Ron Klinger

This was yesterday's puzzle:

You are the dealer, with both sides vulnerable. What would you do with:

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▲ Q10976432
♥ --
◆ KQ1085
✿ --
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You have a 3-loser hand, which prima facie is too good for a pre-empt, but on the other hand you have only 7 HCP. Your high-card strength and defensive potential is too little for a $1 \ge 0$ opening. Few would quarrel with a $4 \ge 0$ opening.

That was the easy part. The auction then becomes exciting:

| West | North | East | South |
|-------------------|-------------|------|-------|
| 4♠ | $4NT^{(1)}$ | Dble | 5♣ |
| 5¢ ⁽²⁾ | 6 ♣ | 6♦ | 6♠ |
| Pass | 7♣ | Pass | Pass |
| 2 | | | |

(1) Takeout with a two-suiter

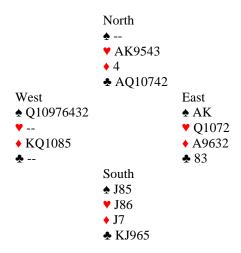
(2) A pre-emptive opener should not bid twice, but with this extreme pattern, you can understand West's 5.

What would you do now with the West hand?

Since partner's double of 4NT was looking for penalties, partner clearly has a good hand and partner's pass of $7 \clubsuit$ should be taken as forcing. Partner is offering you the choice between bidding on to $7 \blacklozenge$ or doubling the opponents for penalties. Since you have no prospect of a defensive trick against $7 \clubsuit$, it should not be too hard to bid $7 \blacklozenge$.

This was the full deal, which arose in a teams' match on BBO:

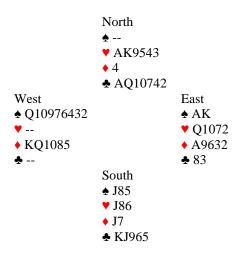
Dealer West : Both vulnerable



As you can see, $7 \bullet$ played by West is unbeatable with a combined total of 20 HCP. Shape beats points again. It would be nice to report that $7 \bullet$ was what happened, but alas, no. I have no idea what South's $6 \bullet$ meant, but when North bid $7 \bullet$, East doubled. That ended any possibility of West bidding $7 \bullet$.

What do you think of East's double? There was no certainty that 7♣ could be defeated. Suppose you swap North's ♦4 for South's ♥6. Now North-South have no diamond loser, no heart loser and 7♣ makes. Clearly West has an extreme hand for bidding 5♦ despite East's double of 4NT. Maybe North could be 0-7-0-6.

Dealer West : Both vulnerable



In any event, 7♣ doubled went two down. North lost a diamond and a heart, East-West +500. At the other table, East-West bid to 6♣ and that was doubled. West had no trouble making an overtrick for +1860 and +16 Imps.

Problem for Tomorrow:

Dealer North : Nil vulnerable

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West North East South

1 \checkmark^{(1)} 1 \bigstar

2 \checkmark 3 \checkmark^{(2)} Pass ?

(1) Playing 5-card majors

(2) Strength raise to 3 \bigstar
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What would you do as South with:

▲ KQJ1087
♥ 4
◆ AJ74
▲ J5

Why not phone or email your bridge partners and compare your answers and your reasoning?

What's blonde and dead in a closet? The Hide-and-Seek Champion of 1991.